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SOME FACTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN CONNECTION WITH THE FOOD PROBLEM

BY HOWARD HEINZ,

Chairman of Committee on Food Supply, Committee of Public Safety of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Nansen spoke about the misfortune of Norway in losing almost all her fine inhabitants, and I want to say that it has been my experience that it has been this country's good fortune to have gained them.

I believe if every man and woman in this country knew Mr. Hoover as he is, the unselfish way in which he is going about his job, the fact that he has nothing to gain, no glory in it, but runs the chance of criticism from farmer, from distributor and finally, from the consumer—they would still better realize the size and importance of the service that he is giving to his country.

I speak not as an expert, not as a scientist, but just as a plain, common consumer who is very much interested in the problem that concerns the people of our commonwealth, the nation and the world at large: our food supply.

With between thirty and thirty-five million men in uniform, consuming a daily average of at least 35 to 40 per cent more than is their custom, with every man and woman in this country, who is willing to work, in a job, which means also increased consumption of food, we have the greatest demand for food that the world has ever known.

What have we in supply? In the meat supply, we have a world shortage of 115,000,000 meat animals today, and it is growing every day because of the inability of foreign countries to provide sufficient fodder. In England today, they have decided to begin killing off more extensively their animals in order to preserve their maize for human consumption. In this country, we have today seven million less meat animals than we had seventeen years ago, and our population is 26,000,000 more than it was at that time; thus, you can see how far away we are from meeting even the home demand and the

reason for the present price of meat. I think it is estimated that 43 per cent of man's living cost goes for food, and nearly 50 per cent of that, on an average, goes into meat and meat products; hence, the importance of the meat situation.

The world wheat shortage amounts to millions of bushels. Our allies have called upon us for between 250,000,000 and 300,000,000 bushels of wheat if we can get boats over safely with it; and if we can't, God pity our allies.

Now, how are we going to meet this question of world shortage in food supplies? I want to direct your attention to what seems to me to be one of the most important points and one of the first to be discussed, namely, the question of production. People who live in cities and who have to pay high prices don't consider that sufficiently. We have to enter into a serious consideration of the world's production markets to enable us to gain a proper attitude toward the producer. The farmer is too little understood.

Have you ever seen any millionaires made on farms? I haven't. Forty per cent of the farms in this state of Pennsylvania are occupied by tenants today. Does that indicate that there is very much money in farming in Pennsylvania? Do you know that the farmer is paying from 75 to 150 per cent more for his machinery? Do you know that his labor has increased over 100 per cent? His seed has increased in some instances from 200 to 300 per cent. His fertilizer, when he can get it, is at almost prohibitive prices. The farmer has problems that we must help him to meet. It might, for example, be very much better for us to pay an increased price for milk as a means of diminishing the number of dairy cattle that are being sold for slaughter because of the high cost of feed. For if they go on killing off dairy cows at the rate they have in the last three or four months, milk is more likely to be twenty cents a quart within the next twelve months than to be less. In other words, as a first step in solving the food problem, we must encourage the producer and give him at least a reasonable profit if we want him to continue in business.

The proper encouragement of production, if we will just carry it far enough, will take us a great way toward the solution of the entire difficulty, for we can talk about marketing and we can talk about conservation, but if we don't produce, we won't have anything to distribute or to conserve.

The perplexing subject of markets and distribution is receiving

much attention in Washington and by the various states. The middleman who is concerned with this phase of the situation is blamed, perhaps unjustly, for many of our woes. I don't believe there is going to be established immediately a new method of marketing. There will be some attempts at it that will help the situation, but a complete change of our whole marketing and distributing problem will not be made in a day. It has taken a great many years to get us into our present condition, and it will take us some years to get out of it. But there are many things that can be done. I think the Federal Food Administration Law as interpreted and put into execution by Mr. Hoover and those associated with him will tend to eliminate some of the extra commission men and brokers that are not only needless, but actually detrimental to both producing and consuming interests.

I think, too, that Mr. Hoover's control of profits, the prevention of hoarding, the cutting out of speculation, will go a long way toward solving the problem of distribution cost. Woe be to the food pirate who falls into the clutches of the law. It will not be very healthful for him, and it shouldn't be, for with the condition of the food supply of the world today, for a man to bargain, to hoard, to speculate in that which concerns human existence, is an outrage against humanity and should be stamped out.

We are trying in Pennsylvania some changes from the regulation channels of distribution by the establishment of curb markets. They have been successful in a number of places and we have in view the establishment of many more of them. They bring the producer and the consumer immediately together; the producer getting more for his produce than he would through the commission man and the retail grocer, and the consumer getting his goods more cheaply.

Another feature of the distribution problem that demands reform is the matter of merchandising service. For many years merchants have been educating consumers to expect service with every purchase, and of course the consumer is charged for the service whether he gets it or not. Now, if the consumer will go to the store and shop for what is there, pay cash and carry it away, we can cut down the cost of distribution considerably. One grocer told me that he could afford, without any question, to reduce his prices, particularly of perishables, from 10 to 12 per cent if people would come to his store, pay cash and take the things home. In regard

to the question of deliveries, some grocers actually average four deliveries per day per house. Somebody has to pay for this, and as such service is always unequal, the poor, who naturally receive the least, suffer most. Such practices must stop if we are to have any kind of a fair method of distribution.

I heard the other day that it was possible in a certain bakery to bake bread for four and one-half cents for a fourteen-ounce loaf, but that when that loaf was delivered to the family it actually cost seven and one-half cents. Now think of it: from the bakery to the grocery store, through the grocery store and delivered to the house, it went up from four and one-half cents to seven and one-half cents, almost 75 per cent. That bakery could have sold its product at the bakery door, with service eliminated, for five cents.

The third thing that we have to deal with in this problem of food supply is the great one of conservation. The women of Pennsylvania have—for we have had investigations made which show it—practiced avoidance of waste to the extent that some of the garbage plants or people in the fertilizing business who get their material from garbage plants, have been complaining over the lack of garbage that is being collected recently. In food conservation I think the women have caught on to what is necessary. Many of them practiced thrift long before this war came on, but simply because they did so doesn't mean that there isn't a lot more to do, because there are little ends to put in here and there that still would make a big volume as applied to the whole of the country.

But there is one factor that doesn't know what food conservation means, and I am sorry to say it is my own sex. Taking him as a whole, man does not seem to realize what is necessary for him to do in food conservation. They say that that is a woman's problem. I have seen very few men eating in restaurants who have changed their usual habits.

Then I think about 10 per cent of the population in this country probably overeat 50 per cent and that another 25 per cent overeat 25 per cent. There are too many people, you will agree with me, who do overeat and perhaps deprive somebody else of needed food and at the same time helping the continual advance in prices. And I want to say to you that I fear prices will be higher before they are lower. The crops are nearly garnered. We know pretty nearly what we have got, and we know how far it falls short of our demand.

Those people who are dealing directly with the food problem are not the only ones who should study it and observe the principles involved in it. Every man, woman and child should enter into the war to the extent of realizing each his own personal, individual responsibility and should play his part if our country hopes to win the war for democracy. It will take every bit that everybody has, with perfect team play, to win the battle. God grant that we may win it soon.

THE HOUSEKEEPER AND THE FOOD PROBLEM

BY CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN,

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The food problem is:

A. How to produce the most food with the least cost in time, labor and money;

B. How to distribute it to the consumer most swiftly, efficiently and economically;

C. How to prepare and serve it, with the least cost in time, labor and money, and with the best effect on our health and happiness.

The housekeeper is the person who stands before the third clause in the problem; who is immediately responsible for those last elements of cost and of human well-being. She is not ultimately responsible, as she acts under direction. The income of the head of the family limits the style in which they live, and his tastes count strongly in the manner of food served. But as he deposes this work to the housekeeper and abides by the result, she becomes the direct agent in the choice and treatment of the world's food.

Food is produced by farmers, graziers and the like for individual profit, and with so little general knowledge of the needs of the world, of national or international relations, of labor conditions, or even of the essential science of the business itself, that the production is by no means at the least cost.

The farmer, so far as he understands it, must consider "the market" in deciding what, when and how much to raise, and that "market" touches the next step—distribution.